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ABSTRACT

This study interviewed 18 graduate students in higher education programs nationwide concerning their experiences in an administrative internship. Specifically, the study addressed the following issues: connections made by students between the internship and classroom experience; student outcomes from the internship experience; and differences in internship experiences between students at the master's (n=10) and doctoral (n=8) levels. The interview protocol included questions related to the structure of the internship, reflection, requirements, workload, and relevance to the student's program and professional goals. Content analysis identified four major themes: (1) organization of the internship; (2) opportunities for professional development; (3) a chance for involvement and a sense of "belonging"; and (4) associations between theory and practice. Analysis led to the following recommendations: departments of higher education should consider providing adequate and commensurate credit for faculty who serve as supervisors of higher education interns; internships should be highly structured in order to provide time for meaningful "job shadowing," the completion of specific job-related tasks and projects, and group and personal reflection; and higher education departments without a structured internship program should consider partnerships with the campus office of cooperative education. (Contains 34 references.) (DB)

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"A Slice of Reality: Internships in Higher Education Programs

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This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held in Miami, Florida, November 5-8, 1998. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

Abstract

Administrative internships are one form of experiential learning experience available to graduate students in higher education programs, yet current literature reviews locate very little research on this topic. This paper explores graduate experiences with internships in higher education programs through semi-structured interviews of students who have completed internships in academic administrative settings. Common themes emerged from the data and centered around several ideas: (1) organization of the internship, (2) opportunities for professional development, (3) a chance for involvement and a sense of "belonging" and (4) associations between theory and practice.

"A Slice of Reality: Internships in Higher Education Programs

You can't just end your program with a great library on your shelf with all these highlighted textbooks and not have actually experienced what it is you study about.

In the business world, you can only become the leader after going through the other layers. I think it's a shame that in education we think that if you read a book and write a paper and get that degree, you can jump to that level without having gone through the mailroom. That's what the internship is doing, giving us those experiences at the very grassroots level so we know how those people think, so we know what's involved.

I think that you have to have a way in higher ed to break in...and you need someone like a financial aid director or a athletic director or an admissions director to call somebody, to write a good letter of recommendation or to be a reference for you. You need that, and you're not going to get into higher ed without that.

Increasingly, higher education institutions in the United Sates are criticized for not adequately preparing students for life and employment in the "real world." From a utilitarian perspective, higher education is not faring well in the public's eye in the preparation of a skilled and educated public. Higher education tends to get "blamed" for problems arising in the work force (Schon, 1987). The political climate for education is such that faculty and administrators are being asked to do more with less and to meet calls for a skilled citizenry. Academic administration is a balancing act that strives to be accountable to the public while maintaining traditional academic values and freedoms (Fife and Goodchild, 1991). If academic leaders are to satisfy the needs of an ever-critical public, they must be adequately prepared to do so both academically and professionally.

Although there is no set path to academic administration, higher education programs do contribute a significant number of graduates to college and university administration (Townsend and Wiese, 1991). Thus, in a time when higher education is subject to public debate and scrutiny, it is important to look at the preparation of students in higher education programs- the future leaders of postsecondary education- to examine the content and quality of their education.

In addition to curricula to introduce students to higher education, some programs require and/or offer students the opportunity to participate in internships. These experiences allow students to simultaneously work in an office on campus, either at the degree granting institution or another campus, as part of their curriculum. Typically, these type of offerings allow students to gain practical experience while having a class, seminar, or independent study to reflect upon the experience and connect it to concepts and theories presented in textbooks on higher education. The merit of these kinds of experiences for students in programs other than higher education are well documented to contribute to reflective practice (Cash, 1992; Branch, 1991; Farrell, 1992; Gottfried et al, 1993; Harcharik, 1993; Schon, 1987; Washington, 1992; Werner, 1989).

In higher education, however, little is known about the students' experiences with internships. A recent study examined questions related to the availability and utilization of internship programs in higher education through a survey of program directors (Foster and Ward, 1996). The study found that most departments offer internships, but many of them on an elective basis. What is lacking in the research about internships in higher education is the students' perspective. If internships are available as electives, what prompts students to participate? At this juncture little is known about the benefits internships offer students preparing for careers in college and university administration from the student perspective.

To address this void in the research, the purpose of this paper is to examine the experiences of students in higher education who have completed an administrative internship. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions. What connections do students in internships make between the internship and classroom experience? What outcomes do students gain from these internships? Do administrative internship experiences differ for students at the master and doctoral levels?

Given the lack of literature on internships in higher education programs, this paper includes an overview of relevant literature on experiential education and internships in general, and internships in graduate professional programs other than higher education (e.g., K-12 educational administration, health administration). Following, the paper provides a description of the methodology employed to address the above research questions, the findings of the study, and implications for higher education programs and practice.

Experiential Education and Internships

Learning by doing has always been an important part of education. Educational and learning theorists are quick to speak of the importance of engaging students in hands-on learning as a means to enhance comprehension and engagement of subject matter (Dewey, 1938; Hutchings and Wutzdorff, 1988; Kolb, 1985). Educational field experiences designed to assist students in the application of concepts and skills in a "real world" setting are categorized variously as clinical activities, performance-based activities, practica, preceptorships, clerkships, scientific work experience, and internships (Chance, 1990; Gottfried, et al, 1993; Stark et al, 1986; Veir, 1990). Werner (1989) argues that field experiences should be grouped into three classifications of course based activities, practicum, and the internship and that each activity should serve a specific purpose in providing opportunities for students to enhance, refine and practice work related skills. These kinds of experiences are well documented to have positive effects on student development and comprehension (Hutchings and Wutzdorff, 1988; Kolb, 1985; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991).

Clinical course based, or performance-based field activities facilitate a student's broader understanding of the connection between the academic setting and the world of activities associated with a specific profession (Chance, 1990; NASSP, 1985; Werner, 1989). Awareness building experiences and projects which allow the student to critically analyze a professional

work activity, report the outcomes of specific professional engagement, and provide a forum for student discussion of professional issues and concerns form the basis of course based activities which are generally completed within the context of a specified academic course at a particular time, usually the period of an academic semester. This type of experience may involve students in shadowing an administrator to get a sense of their work as part of the requirements for a particular course.

Practicum experiences are characterized by course work or selected activities that emphasize the application of conceptual and practical skills in a selected field site (Cash, 1992; Daresh, 1987; Werner, 1989). Students engaged in practicum activities have generally completed advanced course work which equips them with the requisite concepts and theories that have the potential to be applied within the professional work setting (Keenan, 1992). Most work associated with a practicum is generally completed by students or active professionals engaged in advanced study at times outside of their usual routines. Practicum experiences emphasize close working relationships between students and the cooperative professional workers or administrators who provide work supervision, the demonstration of specified skills, and the completion of a project which makes a significant contribution to the professional organization in which the student is situated (Cash, 1992; Chance, 1990; Cottrill, 1994; Gottfried, et al, 1993; Washington, 1992; Werner, 1989).

The internship is characterized by full-time service in a professional job that is different from the student's regular employment and in which the student is supervised by a professional (Farrell, 1992; Gottfried et al, 1993; Keenan, 1992; Werner, 1989). Through the internship, an attempt is made to actively involve the student in a variety of responsibilities that are inherent within the particular professional practice. Cottrill (1994) and Werner (1989) state that the length of the internship experience should be a period of a year, but not less than a semester.

The success of the internship experience is directly related to the components, processes, and structures that support it. Chance (1990), Eyler (1994), and Stark et al (1986) propose that the internship experience is successful only if it provides an opportunity for students to integrate reflection with action and problem solving routines within the context of the placement. Branch (1991) believes that the proper mix between the goals of the individual and the needs of the host organization will result in a successful internship experience that is mutually beneficial to both the individual and the institution. Werner (1989) and Veir (1990) contend that successful internships are fostered through the joint cooperation of experienced professors and practitioners who provide guidance and meaningful on-the-job experiences for students.

Studies of students in internships from a wide array of fields illustrate the benefits derived from these experiences. Cash (1992) found that student interns from a variety of academic specialties who worked in a college's institutional research office accrued varied benefits from their work experiences. Psychology interns were encouraged by their departmental faculty to submit their research work for presentation at a regional meeting of the American Psychological Association. The submitted work was accepted for presentation. Mathematics interns gained important skills in the use of statistical packages that supported their advanced course work and aspirations for graduate study. Students from such disciplines as Sociology, Economics and Business Administration perceived themselves as being more job marketable because of the skills they attained in the areas of research and evaluation during their internship. One student intern obtained a position in a Chicago bank shortly after completing the internship experience and credited that experience as being key to obtaining the new job position.

Keenan (1992) found that over one-quarter of all students who were involved in advertising internships offered by eighty-four schools of Journalism received a job offer from the host organizations. In follow-up studies of practicing school administrators who had completed

a required internship as part of a master's degree in school administration at the University of Texas, Austin, Veir (1990) noted that study respondents were more often than not offered employment as administrators in districts where their internship experience was completed. Opportunities to observe interns' knowledge base, philosophy of education, and personal and administrative qualities and attributes were cited by respondents as being key considerations of their job offers by school districts.

Washington (1992) found that graduate Health Care administration students increased their desire to pursue health care administration careers and to complete the requisite program of studies when they were involved in internship experiences that included opportunities for them to help hospital supervisors in administrative tasks requiring physical activities.

Practicing teachers participating in the multifaceted St. Louis, Missouri Research Internship Programs, involving collaboration and on-the-job interactions with professionals from industry and academia in the fields of science, mathematics, and technology, noted significant professional and career benefits to their involvement in internship experiences (Gottfried, et al, 1993). Benefits cited by the teacher interns included: (a) increased content knowledge in science and technology, (b) increased knowledge of applications of science in the work place (c) increased awareness of the relationship of math and science to technology and society, (d) increased experiences in scientific research design and experimentation, and (e) enhanced ability to design and implement hands-on classroom lessons. Additionally, graduate teacher interns reaffirmed their goals for being teachers and began to perceive of themselves as agents of change and innovation in their school districts (Farrell, 1992; Gottfried, et al, 1993).

A recent study conducted by Foster and Ward (1996) about internships in higher education programs found that master's students were most likely to take advantage of internships. At the master's degree level, 56 percent of students have internship experiences

that are required and independent of the student's current employment. Forty percent of the Ed.D. programs required internships, with a majority of these experiences not connected with the student's current employment. In contrast, only 18 percent of Ph.D. programs required internships as part of their curriculum while 79 percent gave students the option to participate in internships at their discretion.

The organizational structure and availability of internships vary according to degree program and degree levels, but current literature attests to the value and importance of such an experience. Because of limited research particularly in the area of higher education, this study seeks to address the following questions as a means to explore the internship as a vehicle to prepare future leaders in higher education administration: (1) What connections do students in higher education internships make between the internship and classroom experience? (2) What outcomes do students gain from these internships? (3) Do administrative internship experiences differ for students at the masters and doctoral level?

Research Methods

Drawing upon data from a qualitative study, this paper bases its findings upon interviews with eighteen students in higher education programs nationwide who have participated in an administrative internship. The interview protocol builds upon results of an earlier survey of higher education department chairs which sought to uncover experiential opportunities offered students in higher education programs (Foster and Ward, 1996). The protocol included questions related to the structure of the internship, reflection, requirements, workload, and relevance to the students program and professional goals. Interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed. Additional follow-up questions were asked of the respondents through electronic mail messages.

Sample

Criterion sampling was used to select ten master's and eight doctoral students who participated in internships in an administrative office. Participants responded to requests for interviews placed through the authors' academic department, solicitations at national conferences, and electronic requests placed on educational list serves (FINAID-L, AERA-GSL and GradTalk). Students interviewed had completed an internship experience satisfying criteria concerning academic credit, length of experience, and degree program.

For the purpose of this study, an internship differed from an assistantship in that the academic department must offer academic credit for an internship. Clinical experiences such as internships, practicum, and field placements vary in length, but for the purposes of this study each respondent must have completed experiences lasting at least one semester, although several students indicated performing two practica, each at least one quarter or semester in length. Student interns complete reflective papers, journals, or logbooks, and meet with office and academic supervisors, as well as group discussions with other student interns. Finally, because the request for student respondents appeared on general graduate students' list serves, we received a strong response from students enrolled in other graduate programs (e.g., business administration, sociology and economics). Only students enrolled in master's or doctoral programs in higher education were interviewed.

Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed and then coded using content analysis (Patton, 1980). Common themes emerged from the analysis that were consistent throughout the interviews. The overriding themes were related to program organization, professional development opportunities, involvement and a sense of belonging within the organization, and connections between theory and practice. Following these themes are explored more thoroughly.

Findings

Organization of the Internship

Student experiences with their internships varied in part dependent upon how organized their academic departments were with setting up placements and how ready offices were to receive and use interns. The level of organization among departments was variable in direct proportion to whether internships were required or elective. This study makes clear that master's degree students are most likely to seek internship experiences because of degree requirements. Internships tend to be required for students at the masters level. Departments establish internship programs or partnerships with other campuses to aid students in the process of internship placement. A master's student explained the procedure at her university is "basically in place for students coming in. We have to do some legwork as far as getting the actual paperwork done, but basically, it's everything from Academic Advising to the Women's Resource Center and they have an agreement that they'll take at least one student if one of us wants to be in their office." In contrast, several doctoral students commented that coordinating internships required initiative and motivation. "Go for it, but you go for it. They [academic departments] were not the ones making the arrangements."

Internships, practicums, and field experiences all offer experiential educational opportunities varying in length and scope. Some graduate interns' experiences emphasize observation and "shadowing" of employees and administrators. Other students assume specific tasks within the internship experience: international student newsletter, orientation program, or financial aid morning counselor. Interviews revealed that interns given "segments of responsibility" or assigned "specific functions" were more likely to express satisfaction with completing a particular job.

Some students who designed internships individually and lacked this structure mentioned feeling as if their "hands were tied" and a desire to "expand a little more" within the internship. A master's student with prior experience in financial aid commented, "There is a tendency to still regard you too much as a student rather than a professional...I feel like there was not enough confidence put in my abilities to do things." A doctoral student who arranged his internship experience in intercollegiate athletics explained that he "would have liked to have found something that [he] would have been totally responsible for and not just observed." Similarly, a doctoral student with a past internship experience in human resources commented, "Were I to do it again, I'd definitely set some different parameters and I would definitely still do assigned projects, but also express my desire to do other things as well."

Professional Development

Clearly, some of the strongest benefits of internships for both master's and doctoral students in higher education are the opportunities provided for professional development and career preparation. Data analysis reveal several categories of professional development: hands-on experience, awareness of the political arena in higher education, and increased mentoring and networking relationships. Following is a description of each of these categories inclusive of data from the interviews.

"Hands-on experience." Internships provide graduates students with "an opportunity to see inside another segment of the university and how it works." Students move beyond theory-based classrooms with textbook learning and lectures to experience the "real world" of the academy through daily operations in college and university administration. As one graduate student explained, her internship was "a slice of reality, not just the classroom routine." Another student added, "Internships have given me practical and empirical information. The degree naturally credentializes me, but it's the internship that proves that ability."

Internships familiarize students with the overall structure of the university or college system, and specific modes of operation within different administrative offices. For students already working part-time or full-time in the university setting, an internship augments a current knowledge base of the college student population. One intern, who worked full-time in financial aid, performed an internship in admissions to expand her knowledge about recruitment and retention issues. "It gave me a broader understanding of issues and how students end up in my office....Sure, I could do my job without it, but like I said, I like to understand what I'm doing."

Within the structured, time-limited boundaries of an internship, students can safely determine their compatibility with an office. One master's student compared his student teaching practicum to his more current internship experience in academic counseling. His internship experience occurred part-way through his academic coursework, leaving him time to "stop and regroup" if he disliked the area of academic counseling.

Graduate interns explore "life in the trenches": working conditions, student contact, employment opportunities, and monetary compensation. Graduate students, particularly doctoral students with previous work experience, or holding current positions in an educational setting, must determine if employment opportunities revealed through an internship will be "worth [their] time money-wise." That is, will an internship yield a better job in the end? As one former doctoral intern explained, his "enthusiasm has been dampened" with the internship experience because he realized he needed the years of experience only available through the lower-paying, entry-level positions in the office.

Political arena. Academe is a political beast. Internships insomuch as they are "real world" experiences provide students with firsthand knowledge of how politics influence the workplace without being immersed in the thick of the political area. A recurring theme throughout the interviews was an awareness of the political atmosphere of an office or

institution. An intern in financial aid explained, "the college campus is a very political scene. You don't make enemies here. You can speak out, but know that word travels quickly around the campus." Exposure to campus politics provides a pragmatic addition to the more esoteric, "ivory tower" view of higher education experienced through classroom learning alone. Students acknowledged that "at all times you need to be politically attuned" to understand the politically charged atmosphere present in academe, and understand "specifics on who has power and who does what." Internship experiences communicate the importance of political savvy, and "getting along in a professional atmosphere, in a professional department with others in it."

Interns can witness and reflect upon politics without having to make decisions and get overly involved. "As an intern, I was a 'disinterested observer'...I could look at the theory and application, the pros, cons, the problems, and not take it personally. When it's a job, you can't do it as a disinterested observer, you're too invested." Another graduate intern spoke of completing her experience in the midst of possible employee strikes. "What happens to us students if all the employees walk because of salary problems? That's reality and it can happen." Internships provided students with the valuable opportunity to be a participant observer of the political arena.

Mentoring and networking. The old adage, "it's not what you know, it's who you know" is apropos in higher education. Internships were invaluable for the students in this study for the connections made between the campus and the larger world of higher education. A master's student completing an internship in residence life pointed out, "It's a good place to find a job. I know of several students who've been offered jobs in that particular office or some other place on campus after completing an internship because you have the chance to actually display your abilities." Another master's student who had accepted an offer as a financial aid counselor shared his employment strategy.

> I was actually planning to go to the state conference, but I couldn't because of lack of money. So he [my supervisor] went and he was my one connection. He spoke with practically everyone he knew was there and let them know if they needed someone new in financial aid, he knew me.

Students develop mentoring relationships through internship experiences, often with their supervisors or the director of the office. A master's student reflected, "we [the director of financial aid and the intern] didn't have formal meetings. It was more like we'd talk at the end of the day or I could stop in the office to ask questions. He was completely open to questions from me." Another graduate intern commented, "We couldn't communicate as equals, but I think he [the director] respected my opinions because I was thinking beyond this office." Graduate student interns are capable of bringing new perspectives and ideas to an office that can be developed through mentoring relationships with current administrators and supervisors.

Further, students can immerse themselves in campus networks through internships, often leading to jobs that otherwise would not have been available, as in the case of one graduate student who interned with the administrative offices at the law school. "It led to a full-time job offer at the end which I accepted. I had made connections with people and they were pleased with my performance and tried to find a position that would work for me." Another student, after presenting a proposal on a shuttle service for a campus, was then hired by the college as a consultant when the proposal was funded. Interns often prove invaluable to an administrative office and are able to secure employment through networks they have established.

"One of the Crowd"

A strong theme emergent through the interviews concerned socialization into an administrative setting. Internships provide students with opportunities to interact professionally with current professionals through staff meetings, office and campus committees, and university events such as staff picnics and parties. In many internship placements, graduate students take on roles and responsibilities normally assigned to a staff member, in effect assuming the role of a

part-time professional. Some offices reserve certain duties for a yearly incoming graduate intern (e.g., orientation programs, financial aid new student presentations). One student explained that she felt accepted into the office when, "the office staff just got new name tags and mine says 'Admissions Counselor' and not 'grad student'." Another doctoral student commented, "I felt like one of them- a professional. I think the students that came into the office didn't realize that I was an intern, they just thought I worked in the office."

This involvement and continual integration with higher education professional staff and administration often continues beyond the end of an prescribed internship experience, and marks the beginning of professional relationships formed through the administrative office. "I felt that I was connected with that [former internship office site] group...I think that feeling was mutual because I still have friends there and I go back to see those people." Other students commented on continual involvement with campus committees, contact through conferences and social connections that were established via the internship.

Connections Between Theory and Practice

Internships provide valuable linkages for students between theory and practice. Students have an opportunity to see theory displayed through interactions with the university population. One student commented, "you can read the book and discuss the ideas, but it takes actually being with a student or in the staff meeting to make the connection." Another student who handled discipline problems in the Greek system with her internship commented "...you're thinking in your head, 'oh, he's at this stage of Kohlberg or he's in this vector of Chickering's.' Theory gives me the tools to meet them where they're at." Connections emerge between internships and theories learned through various higher education classes: student development theories, management and leadership styles, enrollment strategies, human personnel theory, and interpersonal communications.

Several respondents spoke to the importance of self-reflection after the internship experience when they were no longer "immersed" in the internship. "I had taken a course on student services and I can't say that I even thought about the theories we studied or used, but I think, retrospectively, looking back on it I could see how you could apply some of the different theories."

Internships provide a viable method to observe how office leadership and management styles in practice affect the balance of higher education departments. An intern with intercollegiate athletics commented: "The athletic department here is very collegial. They talk about their problems and get input from all the others. They work as a unit. It was nice to see site-based management involving all of the assistant athletic directors." From a graduate intern in human resources: "The director is a very participatory management person. She believes in getting all of her people involved with decision making."

Participation in reflective seminars, round-table meetings and group discussions allows graduate students opportunities to dialogue about their experiences, and to make links between class content and higher education practice. The importance of organized, structured reflection was voiced by a master's student who had recently completed an internship in admissions.

> Since all of us were in the midst of practicum experiences at once, it added quite a bit to the classroom with discussions from all areas of student services and administration. If only some of us had been going through practicums and not the entire class, it would have been up to us to make more connections between work and class.

In comparison, the following comment was made by a doctoral student who developed an internship on her own accord.

> I would have liked to have worked into the schedule somehow more time for reading. I would have liked to have devised a list of books or journal articles that help people in my field, and if I couldn't read them during the internship, at least I'd have that list and start reading them when I left.

Interactions with other graduate interns provide students opportunities for structured self-reflection through reading, journaling and dialogue with others, peer support, and opportunities to enhance problem-solving skills.

Summary

The findings in these study center around four major themes—organization of the internship itself, professional development, involvement and a sense of belonging within the organization, and connections between theory and practice. The findings suggest that those departments with a more organized and structured approach to internships for their students are more likely to have students that gain from the experience. In instances where students themselves are solely responsible for organizing the internship there is a greater likelihood of the experience being disconnected from the student's larger program. Internships provide invaluable opportunities for professional development. Internships often lead to employment and at a minimum help students establish professional networks and contacts as they finish their programs and pursue employment or advancement. Perhaps one of the most important findings of the study is the opportunity internships provide for students to belong in another setting on campus in addition to their graduate program. Internships help students develop additional mentoring relationships and expand their networks. And, perhaps most importantly, internships make students feel like they are "one of the crowd" and give them a sense of belonging. The ultimate goal of experiential learning is for students to see theory in action. This is particularly important in a professional field like higher education. The interns in the study saw direct links between course content and their placements. These connections were, in part, dictated by how structured curriculum were in the program to facilitate students in making these connections. Following we discuss the limitations of the study, a discussion of the findings, and conclude with recommendations for practice.

Study Limitations

Graduate students' experiences in higher education vary drastically depending upon their institution, enrollment status and student employment. The students involved with this study were self-selected. Because of the small number of respondents, all conclusions drawn are tentative regarding differences between master's and doctoral students' internship experiences. From these interviews, we found that master's students are more likely to experience established internship programs as a required component of a higher education program. These students appear more likely to uncover job opportunities as a direct result of the internship. In contrast, doctoral students are more likely to be previously employed with some other form of work, and view entry-level professional positions as not feasible "money-wise." "It would have to be a pretty high position for me to consider it," remarked one doctoral student. These same doctoral students point out that regardless of education level or previous employment history, university search committees still require several years experience.

> I've done the research, have the academic theory, but they're still looking for people who have two or three year's experience. Up to a point the internship is helpful because it's getting my foot in the door, but in and of itself, it's probably not enough to get a job.

This distinction between degree types and institution should be examined more closely in future studies.

Second, the number of administrative offices in which respondents performed internship experiences varied with multiple activities and routines. With our initial perusal of internship structure and benefits, we did not specify particular administrative offices, only degree and academic credit guidelines. Further research should focus on the structure and benefits related to internships in certain areas (e.g., enrollment services, career services).

Discussion and Conclusions

What is it that those of us who work with students in higher education can take from this study? We center our discussion around two themes that emanate from the findings of the study: relationships between *theory and practice* and making *connections* on campus.

Theory and practice. Donald Schon (1987) in his well-recognized work *Educating the Reflective Practitioner,* points to the need to provide students in professional fields with hands-on learning experiences that connect the classroom or as he calls it "the esoteric world of the academy" with the "practice world." (p. 37). Clearly, the intent of internships for students in higher education is to provide them with opportunities to apply their learning in "real world" settings. The findings from this study illustrate that students do in fact get to see "theory in action" through the internship experience. Many faculty in higher education argue that internships are not necessary for their students because they already have practical experience in the field. In essence, these students have already done many internships. It is not the intention of this paper to downplay the important role past and current experience contributes to student learning and in the preparation of the higher education practitioner. However, internships are distinct from employment in that they call upon students to make connections between the classroom and higher education practice and allow students to move simultaneously between the classroom and the internship. Too often, this type of reflection is absent if students are simply working (or have had significant work experience from the past) and going to school.

Internships by their very definition are learning experiences thus extending the student role into the work place. The label "intern" allows students to "learn by doing" while buffering students from the aspects of a job that can be cumbersome and inhibit the type of reflection necessary to truly learn from one's job. Typically, interns are brought into the fold of the workplace or a particular project, but are spared involvement in excessive meetings, paper work,

or political interactions; that is, the daily work encounters that take inordinate amounts of time and make it difficult for practitioners to be reflective. Further, internships are typically part-time (compared to full time employment) thus giving students the necessary time to reflect and make connections between theory and practice and to be deliberate in their actions.

The theory and practice connection also has benefits for the higher education professor. Programs that require internships know that students have work settings to call upon as they reflect upon theory in the classroom. Higher education programs tend to be diverse with students from both the master's and doctoral levels and students with experience ranging from a resident assistantship while in college to students who are or have been senior administrators. Internships level the playing field for students and give professors the license to move back and forth between theory and practice--an effective pedagogical strategy (Hutchings and Wutzdorff, 1988; Kolb, 1984).

Connections. In addition to making connections between theory and practice, students who participate in internships also make connections on their campus and in the field of higher education that can lead to expanded employment opportunities. This finding points to the importance of mentorship, belonging to a campus office, and establishing networks as part of the graduate student experience. These findings are particularly pertinent to higher education departments as places where there are combinations of students who are full-time and part-time, master's and doctoral, and commuting and locals. In light of diversity of students in higher education, the internship as an opportunity for students to connect is a finding that can not be overlooked.

In their work on junior faculty socialization, Tierney and Bensimon (1996) point to the need for junior faculty to have multiple mentors. No one person can assume all the responsibility for junior faculty socialization. The findings from the study discussed in this

paper point to a similar finding for graduate students. Internships almost always created at least one new mentoring relationship (usually with a supervisor) for graduate students. Typically, students find a mentor in their advisor or thesis/dissertation chair. This mentoring relationship is invaluable for students as they complete their graduate studies and embark upon their professional careers. However, just as junior faculty stand to benefit from multiple mentors, so do graduate students, and internship supervisors, as mentors were invaluable for students as they sought to navigate the campus community and the professional field beyond the campus.

Students also made connections with the campus simply by belonging to another office, in addition to the graduate program. Alexander Astin's involvement theory (1985) points to the importance of students' involvement in different types of activities in college. Granted, his work largely draws upon research with undergraduates, but the findings apply to what we found in this study as well. Astin believes that the more students are involved in their college-going experience the more likely they are to succeed. Astin's theory applies to the graduate internship for the internship is one more way to be involved in the campus and in the graduate program. The findings from this study point to the important role internships play in being involved in a campus office and being "one of the crowd." Drawing upon Astin's work, we believe that the internship as a form of involvement contributes to student success not just in the professional realm (e.g., securing a job), but also for the positive potential effects an internship can have as a means of greater involvement and belonging on campus.

Past research on graduate research assistants (Perna and Hudgins, 1997) points to the important role assistantships play in student professional development. Benefits include connections with professors, increased career productivity, and enhanced professional socialization opportunities. Similar benefits were part of the students' experiences in this study. Internships, like research assistantships, play an important role in professional socialization for

they connect students with another office on campus and with significant opportunities for mentoring and networking both on campus and beyond.

Building networks is a crucial component of the graduate internship in higher education. By becoming a member of an additional campus office, the findings in this study indicate that students significantly increase their awareness of campus offices and involvement in campus networks. Interns interviewed for this study referred to things like going to meetings with their internship supervisor as a way to meet people and to learn more about different offices on campus. Through these types of activities, students were able to increase their networks on campus which ultimately benefited their feeling involved, in tune with campus happenings, and increased potential for employment.

Perspectives and Recommendations

The experience of students in higher education at the master's and doctoral levels is variable with regard to the use of the 'internship' as a programmatic learning opportunity. This study captures this variability and challenges higher education units to think critically about the efficacy of curricula that deny practitioners, researchers and theorists the opportunity to connect theory and practice in meaningful internship experiences.

We offer the following observations and recommendations about the importance of the 'internship' as a learning experience for future higher education practitioners and researchers to further highlight the efficacy of the experience as a needed and desired component of higher education preparation in a changing climate for postsecondary education and further the need for a systematic review of the components of the internship experience in order to maximize the benefits for higher education students.

Departments of higher education should consider providing adequate and commensurate credit for faculty who serve as supervisors of higher education interns. In this era of increasing

responsibility and accountability for postsecondary institutions, it is important that future practitioners and researchers become apprised of the dynamic connections between theory and practice in order to better serve and meet the demands of a more critical public. Students need to be carefully directed and guided in this undertaking, and faculty designated for this charge should receive adequate faculty credit and recognition and have sufficient time (1) to develop and monitor experiences through internships that bridge the gap between the classroom and practice, and (2) to provide opportunities for students to assess and gauge their skills and competencies in "on the job" projects and activities.

Internships should be highly structured to provide time for meaningful "job shadowing", the completion of specific job related tasks and projects, and group and personal reflection. Many student interns in this study complained that the time between observing job tasks and actually getting "hands-on" experience proved to be a source of some frustration. Time spent in the internship experience should be so structured to provide for both job-shadowing and involvement in and completion of a specific job related assignment. Job-shadowing time should provide the intern with the opportunity to observe and internalize the connections between work and performance that are often driven by internal and external commitments and initiatives. Completing a specific job assignment associated with the site of the internship should provide an opportunity for the student to practice discreet skills that serve as a barometer of personal and corporate performance. Completing specific job related tasks and assignments also provide an opportunity for students to assess gaps in their professional and personal knowledge that can be addressed by further course work and/or research. Importantly, involvement in specific job assignments expands the professional experience and connections which can be so useful later on in the job market of higher education.

Participation in reflective seminars, round-table meetings, group discussions, and/or personal discussion time with the internship faculty supervisor should be an important built in component to the internship experience. Through such opportunities for dialogue, students can make those important links between theory and practice, provide and receive peer support from other student interns, and enhance problem-solving skills and competencies.

Higher education departments without a structured internship program for students should consider partnerships with the campus Office of Cooperative Education. The academic and programmatic demands of a higher education unit may preclude faculty resources to sufficiently provide for the infrastructure needed for successful internship experiences. These infrastructure needs may include developing a data base for internships in higher education offices both on the home campus, at campuses within a college or university system, or at other campuses, providing the proper paperwork to initiate the internship, and ensuring proper credit for the internship experience. Higher education faculty interested in such partnerships should take care that the requisite requirements for the successful completion of the internship (i.e., sufficient faculty supervision, structured assignments and tasks, and reflection time) are understood as components of the partnership. Such a partnership holds great promise for developing an internship experience that is available for students at both the master's and doctoral degree levels.

As academe prepares for what Clark Kerr (cited in Brenemen, 1995) calls "Tidal Wave II"—the second post-war enrollment growth—within a climate of constricting financial support for education, it is imperative that higher education practitioners and researchers be given meaningful experiences that connect the world of the classroom with practical experience. It is this combination of learning that will enable higher education to cope competently and calmly with the challenges facing its leaders in the future.

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